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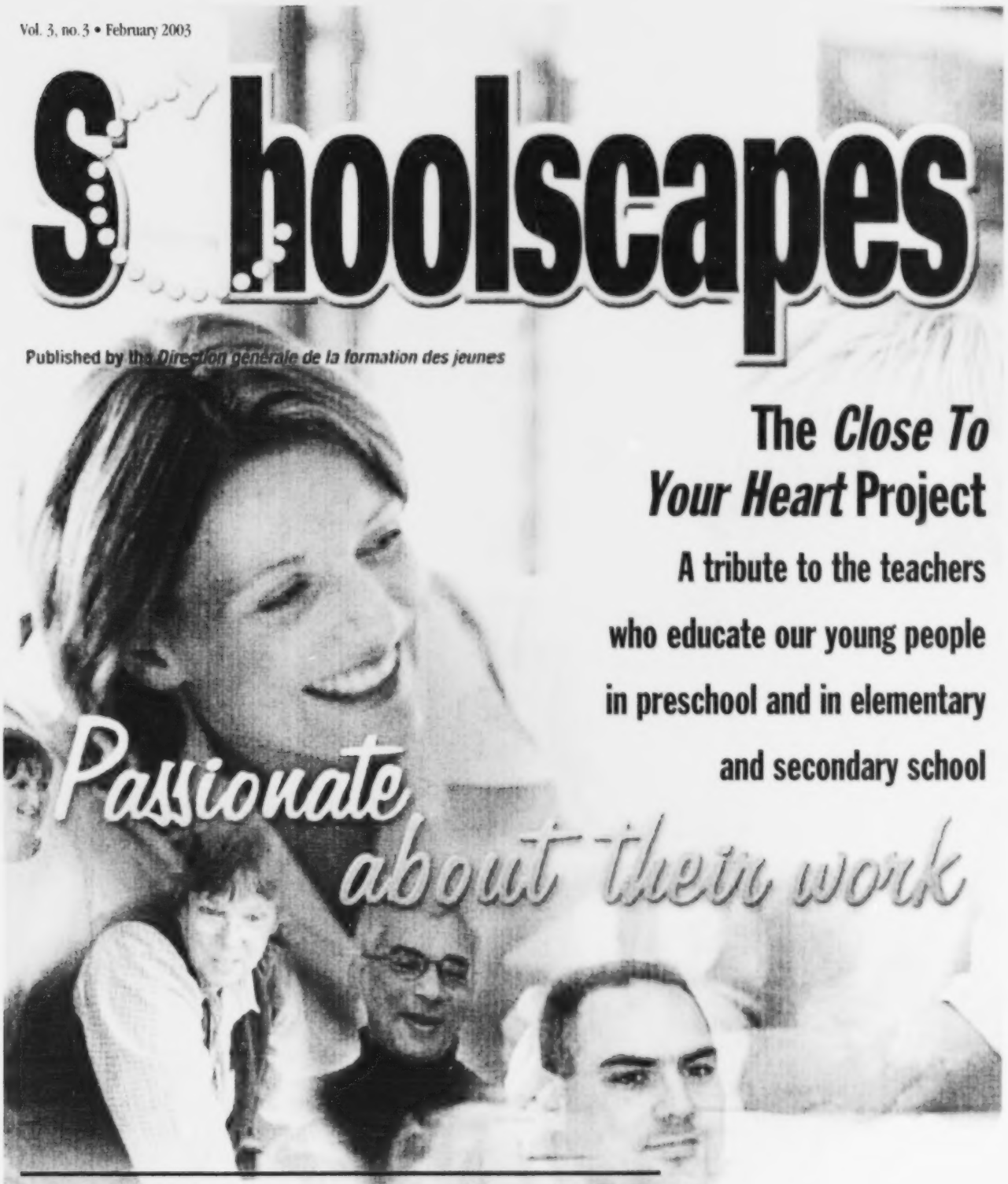

The *Close To Your Heart* Project

A tribute to the teachers who educate our young people in preschool and in elementary and secondary school

Passionate about their work

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Québec

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Happy Teacher Appreciation Week

By Francine Payette

Each of us has an enduring memory of a teacher who played a decisive role at some particular moment of our lives. These professionals enjoy a special place in our hearts, not only for the type of work that they do but also for the passion that spurs them on in their daily activities.

For this Teacher Appreciation Week, *Schoolscapes* is publishing a special issue reflecting the dynamism that flourishes in our schools because of teachers. With this in mind, *Schoolscapes* launched the operation *Close to Your Heart* during last November's provincial conference, which brought together some 500 delegates from school boards and private schools.

Each participant at the provincial conference received a form to fill out, and was asked to submit the name of a teacher who has been exemplary in the practice of the profession through stimulating contact with both students and colleagues, a dedicated and dynamic person who has changed the world by his or her way of being available to others, a person who has made a difference in the milieu.

The directors of educational services, school principals, coordinators and education consultants who attended the meeting submitted the names of more than 200 exceptional teachers. Each name came with words of praise, all of which attested to a strong passion, regardless of the number of years of experience. We are delighted to be able to present you with a certain number of these enthusiastic comments, in the knowledge that in these too brief sketches you will recognize your own qualities. Two qualities were highlighted for each teacher; from reading the comments we came to the conclusion that these are indeed shared. This is why we have presented them in different parts of the publication, like a colourful bouquet.

We conclude with a summary of a speech given by Nérée Bujold during the final session of resource people held last November 26. Mr. Bujold used the example of the apple grower who, to obtain the best apples, must ensure that his trees' roots are properly nourished. We drew a link between this analogy and the teachers of *Close to Your Heart*, who seem so capable of nourishing the motivation to learn, because they have developed the art of understanding and meeting their students' needs, and of drawing inspiration from them even after forty years in the classroom.

Please accept the heartfelt gratitude you deserve for the work you do each day. You are among those who shape Québec's future by guiding young people in their learning.

Why not start a Close To Your Heart project in your school?

Passing the Torch

As teachers well know, things don't always go smoothly at the start. With so much course planning, disciplinary duties and classroom organization, many young teachers feel overwhelmed. Fortunately, however, more and more teaching "pros" lend them a helping hand, each in his or her own particular way. Here are three superb examples of cooperation across the generations.

By Claudine St-Germain, translated by David Fuchs

A Contagious Enthusiasm

After 33 years working within the school system, Louise Parent will retire in June 2003. But the flame that she ignited in so many young teachers will continue to burn.

A brief overview of Louise Parent's career is sufficient to show how passionate she is about teaching. An arts graduate who also received training to deal with young people with difficulties, she began her career as a visual arts teacher in secondary school. For a number of years, she was a consulting educator in Secondary III, a position that existed in the 1980s to provide support to teachers who deal with students with difficulties, as well as direct support to the students themselves.

She then went back to school to obtain a degree in psychosocial intervention and found a position tutoring students with behavioural difficulties who were integrated into regular classes. Then, she moved to Germany where, for three years, she worked as a special education teacher specializing in behaviour modification for the Department of National Defence. Upon her return, she earned a certificate in human resources management and was contemplating becoming a school principal. But her affection for students won out. As the last step in her busy career, she chose to teach the life skills and work skills education program at the École secondaire de la Pointe-aux-Trembles, under the Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île.

"I've worked with different groups in a variety of roles," says Louise Parent. "This is what I enjoyed the most in education. It is a field where you can really develop as an individual and a professional. Education has allowed me to be actively involved, to reflect, to analyze, to change. And to have fun of course!"

Such enthusiasm was bound to be contagious to those who crossed Louise Parent's path. Starting with her daughter Caroline who, at 25, is in her third year as a second language teacher (she is currently teaching at the École secondaire Daniel-Johnson, under the Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île). "The fact that I chose teaching has a lot to do with my mother," she says. "I always saw her taking on new challenges, doing all kinds of interesting projects and above all, instilling positive human values in her students. I remember thinking how great it was to have such an influence on young people. In turn, I wanted to pass on my passion for learning. Her example also showed me that teaching could open doors to working abroad, which is something I would really enjoy doing. I also noticed that the world of education is a field where women are appreciated and respected, and where you can develop professionally."

Another teacher who benefited from Louise Parent's expertise and enthusiasm is Lucie Turcotte, 27. Lucie met Louise during her first year as a teacher, when she obtained a position in the same department. "From the start, she was a very important resource person to me," says Turcotte. "Because we shared the same groups, she was able to help me in my work with the students. I really needed her support, and Louise volunteered her time generously. She was a great listener; I never felt that I was disturbing her or that she was in a hurry. At the same time, she taught me how to be self-confident, and now, five years later, I have become autonomous in my work. She still remains a confidante and a good friend."

Another young teacher who now works with Louise Parent is Guillaume Bolduc, 27, who obtained a contract this year at the École secondaire Pointe-aux-Trembles and is participating in special education training. "Working with Louise is interesting because I feel that our teaching practices are similar, even though we are not from the same generation," he says. "I followed in her footsteps by working in life skills and work skills education and her approach reflects my own vision."

Louise Parent has devoted the greater part of her career to helping students with difficulties. She is in a good position to know that young teachers who pursue careers in special education need even more support than their colleagues in the regular sector.

"In special education, we intervene on a daily basis," Parent points out. "We transmit subject matter just like other teachers, but we also have to deal with young people who are experiencing specific problems. At any moment, students can become troubled on a human level. Classroom management is very different. For this reason, all forms of mentoring must be provided to teachers who work with these students, because our reality is different from that of teachers in the regular classroom."

Lucie Turcotte agrees. Although university training provided her with the tools and knowledge to take action in cases of conflict and other difficult situations, she admits that, between theory and practice, there is a considerable gap to bridge. "You can never know ahead of time how you will react in a crisis. When it happens, you need some time to reflect with someone who can help you understand what happened, analyze the situation and examine the feelings you experienced. With Louise, I learned that no two situations can be dealt with in the same manner and that you have to choose your response carefully. You cannot teach without being concerned first and foremost about the well-being of your students."

This valuable experience is, however, increasingly rare. Many seasoned teachers have retired or are about to do so, with the result that they are already outnumbered by the younger teachers. In her school, Caroline Parent says that there are too many teachers her age in order for the few older teachers to be able to give advice. "It is a pity, because I see young teachers who become isolated and who end up discouraged," she said.

This is a phenomenon that worries Louise Parent greatly. "I fear that young teachers may give up teaching because they don't have the necessary support from their community. For education to remain a passion, you cannot be overburdened by the workload, which can be very demanding. Teachers are expected to be perfect right from the start. This is asking a lot from them!"

Parent believes that this new generation of teachers will face great challenges and she is full of praise for them. "I am so happy to have had the opportunity and the pleasure to work with young teachers! It is such a pleasure to share my knowledge, and they have helped me as well. They are intelligent, dynamic and interested in their work. They are full of ambition and want their students to succeed. We don't need to twist their arms to get them involved; we only need to encourage them and to tell them that they are doing a great job. In this sense, I would like to establish a coaching or mentorship program. I want to continue to convey the message that you can be very happy working in the education field!"

Support for New Teachers: A Winning Formula

Program for the Induction of Teachers into the Teaching Profession

Lorraine Lamoureux was searching for a way to support beginning teachers. The proposal she put forward is so promising that her efforts were recently rewarded by the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec.

As the person responsible for the coordination of on-the-job training, induction into the teaching profession and professional development at the Commission scolaire de Laval, Lorraine Lamoureux recognized early on that new teachers are in great need of appropriate support measures. "I often received calls from teachers I had met during their training periods, who had teaching contracts but didn't know where to turn for answers to their questions," explains Lamoureux. "This inspired me to build a support project to help integrate them."

This project became the Programme de l'insertion professionnelle du personnel enseignant débutant (program of induction into the teaching profession for beginning teachers). It consists of several

A Bridge to Future Generations

By Claudine St-Germain,
translated by Donald McGrath

Although he retired three years ago, Paul Thibault still plays a role at the Collège Durocher Saint-Lambert, where he lends a helping hand to Catherine Pasquini, a former student who has become a colleague.

photo by Christian Lavoie

Paul Thibault spent 35 years at the Collège Durocher Saint-Lambert, which started out as a normal school but is now a private secondary school. Thibault gave a course in teacher training in the early days, but has since moved on to teaching biology. He has also worked as an education consultant and taught at the Université du Québec, among other places. But he has never severed his ties with the Collège.

Catherine Pasquini has also spent a number of years at the Collège Durocher Saint-Lambert. She began as a student, then, while completing her bachelor's degree in education, did a practicum there. Since September she has been teaching biology and a Secondary V environmental education course developed at the college by Paul.

A supportive relationship formed quite naturally between Catherine and Paul, once he set about obtaining a teaching assistantship so that she would not have to teach environmental education all on her own. "I consider Catherine to be a full-fledged teacher, and the goal here is not to create a teaching clone," he explained. "But mentorship can help teachers achieve their full potential by giving them the best possible help and preparation."

In concrete terms, Paul has helped Catherine to put together her "tool box" by placing the teaching material he has acquired over the years at her disposal, and by working with her to collect recent information on the environment. "I could spend hours on the Internet looking for texts for my students, but the help I get from Paul relieves a lot of stress," says Catherine. While she does work hard, of course, developing her own teaching tools, in her first year of teaching—a difficult time for anyone—she can depend on a reliable source of help.

Catherine also receives support from her fellow Secondary V biology teachers. Since they possesses an

components. First, when hired each teacher receives a welcome kit containing a list of available resources as well as practical information they need (phone numbers, Web site addresses, etc.).

A mentoring service is also part of the program. Beginning teachers are paired with experienced teachers, who have volunteered to help their younger colleagues. On a more ad hoc basis, beginning teachers may contact the Service personnalisé d'accompagnement (personalized support service), which allows them to obtain information or voice their concerns through confidential discussion with a member of the induction support team.

New teachers can also attend thematic workshops that are offered throughout the year. These workshops address various issues (supply teaching, homework and assignments, meetings with parents, etc.) and are organized during school hours. The school board covers the costs of release time.

Finally, an Internet-based support group constitutes the virtual component of the program. Beginning teachers can use it to chat anonymously with colleagues, who are experiencing the same type of situations as they are, and with pedagogical consultants in order to find answers to their questions. A questionnaire on class management as well as a number of electronic resources can also be found on the site.

Lorraine Lamoureux counts on a team of twelve people who help her run the program, including two research workers from the Université du Québec à Montréal. An assessment of the program was conducted last year and it clearly demonstrated the program's relevance and effectiveness. Several school boards have already contacted Lorraine Lamoureux in hopes of discovering the secret to her program's success. It comes as no surprise that the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec honoured the induction support team at the Commission scolaire de Laval with an excellence award for this fine initiative.

"Teachers who are entering the teaching profession are being asked to perform very complex tasks," says Lorraine Lamoureux. "They are assigned leftover workloads and difficult groups, come in halfway through the school year, go from one school to another without a home base, and so on. It is not surprising that so many of them are suffering from burnout!"

With an increasing number of positions to fill, school boards are starting to realize that investing in new teachers will yield benefits in the long run, according to Lamoureux. "Young teachers who are starting their careers off on the right foot will become precious resources for schools. We must support them, have confidence in them and, above all, emphasize that they don't have to be super heroes of the teaching profession right from their first year." The commitment of the Commission scolaire de Laval—which did not hesitate to invest in Lorraine Lamoureux's project—was critical to the program's success.

Not content resting on her laurels at the school board, Lorraine Lamoureux is also active at the provincial level. She is chair of the Comité d'orientation de la formation du personnel enseignant (COFPE) and has recently overseen the preparation of a brief entitled "Inheriting a Teaching Tradition," which makes recommendations to help support the induction of new teachers into the teaching profession. She has also considered focusing her attention on the new generation of school administrators, who also need some form of support. In the years to come, there will no doubt be many school teams that will be grateful to her for her involvement.

WEB Sites

Web site of the Service d'accompagnement aux nouveaux enseignants (SANE)
http://www.cslaval.qc.ca/insertion

Web site of the Comité d'orientation de la formation du personnel enseignant (COFPE)
http://www.cofpe.gouv.qc.ca/

in-depth knowledge of the biology program, she discusses class planning and management with them. "I show them the activities I am preparing; it's reassuring to have someone else's opinion when you're doing this for the first time. And whenever I have a problem, I talk to them about it and listen to their suggestions. I'm open to consulting my more experienced colleagues, to see what they'd do in my place. For regardless of the class management courses you take at university, when a real-life situation arises you never react in a planned way."

A Two-Way Discussion

"This discussion between beginner and more experienced teachers benefits everyone," says Paul. "Working with young people allows us to learn, look at ourselves and adapt as required. When I was receiving trainees, I could clearly see their strengths and weaknesses. But at the same time I asked myself, 'Are you sure that you don't make the same mistakes sometimes?' Moreover, young teachers thrive on contact with more experienced ones, and the latter, in turn, also benefit. There are advantages to be had on each side: although novices initially get the larger share, it all balances out gradually as they acquire more experience and become dynamic team players."

Catherine and Paul agree: peer support is essential if young teachers are to have a proper start in their profession. "When you arrive, you absolutely want to work and you think you're capable of taking it all on!" says Catherine. "And sometimes you're left with leftover duties, three or four plans to manage at the same time. Perhaps some take on more than they can handle, and wear themselves out. I wanted to get involved in a lot of activities and make new contributions in my courses, but I realized that I don't have enough time. And I have only half the normal course load!"

This is why Paul would like to see a proper framework for support and supervision established in the school system. He says that it is a question of giving a fair chance to the new generation of teachers, who cannot always count on the support of their peers. "We're currently letting experienced people slip through our hands, people who want nothing better than to serve as a bridge to future generations. Other retired people like myself would be ready to take on a reduced teaching load, or to simply guide young teachers. I am talking about people who have given their lives to their profession, and who want to be sure that it not only continues to go well, but actually improves. I think that more creativity is required in education. Although administrators are concerned with supporting the new generation of teachers, concrete measures are slow to take shape."

From the very beginning their presence in the school has had a powerful effect upon their students and colleagues. With their youthful energy, commitment and enthusiasm, they strike sparks wherever they go!

Caring, creativity,

open to new ideas and opinions,

involvment,

provider of hope,

devoted, generosity,

very caring,

professional attitude,

Close To Your Heart

outgoing,

teaching skills,

Schoolscapes **has put together these portraits featuring elementary-and secondary-level teachers with an exceptional ability to bring out the best in both their students and their colleagues, teachers with passion and energy who are changing the world around them and making a very real difference. This is our way of showing our appreciation for Québec teachers.**

Gary Holzgang

Patricia Peters, principal, describes Gary Holzgang as innovative and creative, with a fundamental understanding of the QEP. "He's been working very hard at changing his teaching practice and leading other teachers to do the same," she says. In particular, he excels in integrating the use of technologies into the curriculum. "His goal is not the technology in itself, but how the technology supports student-centered learning."

"Basically, I'm trying to get kids to be independent learners," says Gary, who is now in his 30th teaching year. His primary motivation—and challenge—is to get kids to keep that bright-eyed, keen attitude they have when they're 5, 6 and 7 years old. Too often, he says, they lose it by Grade 3.

"My goal is to make education meaningful to the kids. I want them to realize it's not something we're doing to them, but something they're doing for themselves." He knows he's succeeded when he sees his students' own pride, "when they feel good enough about themselves and their work that they want to share it with others."

Trisha Klancar

Trisha Klancar has been student council animator for the past ten years. Twice she has succeeded in having her school, located in Québec City, host the Provincial Student Leadership Conference.

It was in recognition of her innovation and her organizational and motivational skills that Ron Corriveau, director of educational services for the Central Québec School Board and former principal of St. Patrick's, gave us Trisha's name. "She also acts as a mentor to new teachers," he says.

"When you're involved in student activities, I think you really see a different part of student life," says Trisha, who has been teaching for 12 years. "Students that are happy in their recreation are happier in class." Students are more motivated when they know their teachers see them succeeding in areas other than academic work, she explains. "They look at class differently, and become more willing to perform academically."

At Howick Elementary School, the principal handed our "Close to the Heart" form over to the teachers, who chose two people: Diane Furey and Roberta De Shaw. "I've looked up to both of them since I've been here. They inspire all of us," says Kathryn Kennedy, a fellow teacher.

Roberta De Shaw

"Roberta has a unique understanding of the emergent learner," says Kathryn Kennedy. "Her students produce works beyond their years… She has high standards and great psychological understanding. She develops an incredible rapport with her students."

"Written language is a very abstract concept for young children," explains Roberta, who holds a Master's degree in emergent literacy. "Up until then, a cat is a cat—it's very concrete. Suddenly they have to associate symbols and sounds."

Roberta finds working with kindergarten and Grade 1 children refreshing. "Children at that age are highly motivated. They want to be able to do what we do." The challenge, she says, is giving them the one-on-one help they need. Whenever possible, she uses volunteers in the classroom. "They're like little birds learning to fly, and they need support. Once the concepts click, then they're off and running on their own. It's magic to see."

Diane Furey

"Diane has an open mind that can find solutions to the most unusual problems," write her fellow teachers. "She encourages students to think for themselves and always finds redeeming qualities in a child. She instills self-esteem and the ability to develop independence."

"I didn't particularly like elementary school," recalls Diane. "I can't spell, and when I went to school, spelling was the most important, it rated how smart you were. I just want kids to be able to have fun at school, to see how much fun learning is. Because you never stop. I'm still taking courses at McGill."

One of her biggest challenges is to continually find new ways to present the material, because "you never know which one the kid's going to catch." You never know what will reach a child or who it will come from. "It can be someone surprising, like the janitor, or school secretary, or a mother who's just stopping in."

Josée Dubrule

Josée Dubrule teaches a special literacy assistance program called Intervention Intensive, where children with reading difficulties are taken out of the regular classroom for 120 minutes each morning. Josée's students are Elementary Cycle One children in French immersion.

"Josée has systematically astounded me," says Martine Delsemme, an FLS consultant and Intervention Intensive coach who goes from school to school to provide guidance. In fact, Martine asked Josée if she could film her to show other teachers in training. "You can really see the children learning, and the results achieved. Josée is an exceptional teacher, extremely enthusiastic and imaginative. She uses a good mix of firmness and gentleness with the children."

Martine also underlines Josée's extraordinary sense of humour. "It's a very demanding program for the children, so it takes a teacher who can balance things with enough humour that the children don't feel too much stress."

Gene Baker

Québec curriculum reformers might have had Holland School in mind when they developed the project-based approach to teaching. Last winter, Gene Baker and her 20 students began learning to play the recorder. By year's end, the children were playing duets and harmonies in a school concert, which they then took to nearby Valcartier Elementary School and a senior citizens' centre. Even though the school has no formal music program, Ms. Baker and two of her colleagues are teaching recorder to a full cycle of five classes this year. "With the new two-year loop, you can do so much more," she said. "We couldn't have done what we did with a group we were just getting to know."

Baker has a love of mathematics and science, but much of her teaching is based on "philosophy for children," an approach developed by U.S. educator Matthew Lipman. "In his book *Kio and Gus*, a blind girl—at first we don't know that she is blind—keeps asking if she is beautiful. The students wonder why she can't tell. We discuss the meaning of beauty and inner beauty with them, and so on. They learn by association and by thinking things through. It's wonderful, and great for their oral skills."

"As teachers," says Ms. Baker, "we don't need to worry about the direction we're going in as long as we keep an open attitude to learning."

Kim Barnes

"She is very involved with her students and is a natural leader," says Lise Gendron-Brodeur, principal of MacDonald-Cartier High School. With 12 years of experience at the school, Kim Barnes is active as the head of the science department for all grade levels (this year she teaches Secondary III and V) and of the physical education program (teaches Secondary V), as well as being the coordinator of cross-curricular projects for Secondary V in the International Baccalaureate program. She is also a member of the governing board and the school's fundraising foundation. With all her various activities, it comes as no surprise that another of her qualities is organization.

"When I see a project that directly gives back to students in the school, that is what I want to be involved in," says Barnes. "The main reason for agreeing to coordinate the grade levels was that I thought it was necessary to organize students' workloads. I love working with the students and am motivated by anything that makes their education better. Many of my functions require teamwork, and the staff I deal with are 100% supportive and very student-driven. We keep things totally on task for students." Barnes believes that the mix of science and physical education has also facilitated relationships with her students, both inside and outside the classroom.

"With all the changes coming in with the curriculum reform, I just want to remind teachers that students are the reason for us all being here."

Deborah Bilodeau

Deborah Bilodeau, Cycle One head teacher, was chosen by her principal, Dietrich Kandler, as his special teacher. "She has a sunny personality that is very infectious," says the principal. "She takes a personal interest in her students and colleagues and uses this insight in her work." Out of a local population of 350, seventy students—ranging from pre-Kindergarten to Secondary II—attend Mountain Ridge School.

"I'm known as 'Ms. B,'" says Bilodeau. "I like Cycle One because I can witness that moment when the kids realize that they're learning on their own: it just comes as a flash. It's that 'I did it' attitude," says this teacher with eight years of teaching experience. "School is pretty much my life, apart from my family. It's also a whole community thing since everybody is somehow related to one another. I have five students, which gives us a lot of freedom. We don't always have all the educational materials, but this community is so rich in its natural and human resources. In the classroom, the kids work at their own goals and are eager to cooperate with one another."

"They know that if they need me, either at school or at home, I'm available to talk and help out. Teaching is really pure pleasure and Old Fort Bay is the place to be." Bilodeau is philosophical about her kids leaving to get their higher education elsewhere. "I know they have a great childhood here, but they're ready eventually to move on to do other things."

Sue Deme

"Sue Deme is an excellent planner," says David Brisebois, principal at St. Joseph. "She is also very patient and makes sure each of the children in her class learns. The kids and the parents really respect her. She is the favourite teacher of many a student."

"When I came to St. Joseph 14 years ago, I really fell in love with the teaching profession," say Deme. "It's a really nice school, and the little kids in grade one with their big smiling faces just steal your heart. For me, their happiness is number one. Teamwork is a little difficult for them at the beginning of the year, but they learn quickly and benefit so much more from the contact with the older students who are just wonderful at helping them out."

Deme is in charge of the school's safety brigade. "I work with grade 6 students who help the other students. They are either on bus duty, in the cafeteria or in the schoolyard. I enjoy working with them on a different level." Second Step is another program she is involved in. It helps students deal with anger through a reconciliation process between students. "A big part of the work with younger kids is helping them to find solutions for themselves. A sense of humour is also very important to make them feel relaxed. Our team of staff work well together, and the parents and people from the community come to lend a hand with special projects (e.g. a medieval times project). Kids never forget these types of activities."

Julie Jenne

"She teaches the most challenging group in the school and is a provider of hope," says Peggy McCourt, principal at Massey-Vanier. Julie Jenne designed and teaches the Personal Academic Community Education program (PACE), an alternative special-needs program for students more than three grade levels behind. In only its second year of operation, PACE has students engaged in learning and reintegrating into higher level programs for the first time.

"These children come to me almost wounded. I aim to bring their self-esteem and pride back and create a safe environment," says Jenne. "First of all, I concentrate on tons of reinforcement. It is not uncommon to see one of those kids come in and give me a hug or talk to me and unload some thing that has happened. I give them things they can accomplish, to start building up their confidence. No one likes to have all their shortcomings pushed in their face."

Her 16 students—five moved on to higher levels at the start of the year—are between 12 and 16 years of age. "My program can be compared to a one-room schoolhouse. One of the biggest rules in my class is that no one is allowed to laugh at anyone else's problems. Even my non-readers will raise their hand and read two or three words for me. I'm a big believer in respect for each other. My principal can hardly believe that I seldom ever have to send anyone up to see her. In a nutshell, what makes me successful is that I care, plain and simple."

Bev Merilees

Kindergarten Teacher, Spring Garden School, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

Bev Merilees was selected by Ken Elliott, the Assistant Director of Educational Services at the school board. "She exemplifies the curriculum reform and is regularly given as an example of best practices," says Elliott. "She is everything for all her students and brings out the best in each one. Bev understands children and gives them responsibilities and leadership, even at that age."

"I've been involved in the kindergarten network since 1986 and as a teacher for 28 years," says Merilees. I enjoy working with young children because they enjoy being in school. When children walk into the classroom, it is as if they're walking into a treasure box. It's delightful to observe. To be able to create an atmosphere in which children thrive is my pleasure and motivation. If I were to teach other school levels, my goal would be to keep that sense of wonder alive. I'm basically developing a relationship with the children, finding out about them, what they enjoy and making that part of my practice."

"A message I often give to my student teachers is: 'Maintain your energy level. You have to always keep learning: go to conferences, go to workshops, get inspired. Get a handle on the age group you are teaching. Take the lead, connect with other teachers.' These are some of the things that sustained me. My goal is turning those five hours children are with me in the classroom each day into a positive experience.

Mary Greig

Teacher, Elementary Cycle One, Franklin Elementary School, New Frontiers School Board

Recent curriculum changes seem to fit Mary Grieg like a glove. As a teacher in a rural elementary school with 61 students and four teachers, she has always aimed for cross-fertilization of subject matter. At Franklin Elementary this year, she teaches kindergarten and Elementary Cycle One students.

"You have to integrate and do lots of team work—this is not new. You pick a theme, try to integrate all the subjects into it, and get the kids to find things out for themselves. First, though, you have to teach them basic skills, like reading, so that they can figure things out. And they have to be media and technology literate as well."

She has taught the same children for three years, so they have come to be very close. "They come to me as non-readers, so I really stress reading and love of books. When they leave Cycle One, they're reading chapter books on their own."

Grieg's small school is like a big extended family, which means a close relationship with colleagues, whom she's quick to credit for doing so much with the resources they have. "We try hard to do everything the bigger schools do," she said. That includes sports activities, a school Web site and the Second Step violence prevention program.

Parental involvement is also critical, she says. "We have a fabulous parent group, doing fundraising, participating in a breakfast program and acting as classroom volunteers. And they work with the kids at home, reinforcing what we do at school. They play a vital role in learning."

Colin D'Souza

Mathematics Teacher, MacDonald-Cartier High School, Riverside School Board

Colin D'Souza teaches Secondary I mathematics at the MacDonald-Cartier High School in Saint-Hubert, where he also coordinates the Secondary I International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program.

According to the school principal, Lyse Gendron-Brodeur, Mr. D'Souza "is very involved with his students, shares extensively with his colleagues and displays exceptional classroom management skills. He is always available to help others, and very open to new ideas and opinions."

Mr. D'Souza, along with two of his colleagues, has been running a student life program for some 25 years. Schoolscapes caught up with him the day after meetings with parents of new students. "Parents have been asking me," he said, "if their children are comfortable in the school? I am pleased that I can say: yes, after two or three days." He went on to talk about the student life program, which provides many occasions for student integration throughout the year. "We have spirit days," he said, "such as 'twin day' and 'pyjama day.' The kids love it. And last year, on September 11, we held a peace rally with students from the École internationale, who share the same building." Mr. D'Souza is highly respected by his colleagues for his dedication to the students and the school.

Garry Sylvestre

English and History Teacher, Bonaventure Polyvalent School, Eastern Shores School Board

Garry Sylvestre teaches Secondary IV English and history at the Bonaventure Polyvalent School in the Gaspé. According to the school's principal, Donna Bisson, "Garry has the ability to make every student who enters his class feel special and valued on a daily basis. He projects professionalism and self-reliance but also makes every other teacher feel competent and needed as part of a complete team."

"I don't teach programs, I teach kids," says Mr. Sylvestre, who has never lost sight of his primary vocation over a 34-year career that has also brought with it extensive administrative duties: a one-year stint as principal of the Bonaventure Polyvalent School, six years as vice-principal of the New Carlisle High School, four years as department head in social sciences for the Eastern Shores School Board and ten years as an adult education coordinator. He is happy that he has been able to work in the subject areas of his choice, and grateful to those who have given him the opportunity to do so."Teaching," he says, "is a process of change; you have to adapt all the time. And you have to keep up with the kids, keep motivating them." Mr. Sylvester welcomes the education reform as a positive step forward.

Their love of their craft, the bonds they forge with their students and the ways in which they are constantly upgrading their skills make these teachers models of commitment.

Hugues Bertrand

Social Studies Teacher, Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

By Donald McGrath

Hugues Bertrand coordinates Secondary IV and Secondary V social studies at the Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School. In the words of fellow teacher Caroline Clarke, "Hugues is involved in every conceivable activity at the school. He takes care of student life and lunchtime activities, organizes fundraisers for cancer research and coordinates the school dances and fashion show. Hugh promotes leadership and community spirit, and knows how to show appreciation for his colleagues. Tutoring students is one of his passions, and he devotes considerable time to it."

"I like empowering students," says Mr. Bertrand. "In my work as a leadership adviser, I don't tell students what to do. I'm more of a guide, and this means letting students make mistakes so that they can learn from them. Inclusiveness is also very important to me. For example, our school's Leadership Crew, which took over from the former student council, is not limited only to the 'good' students. I encourage everyone to get involved." Three years ago the Leadership Crew raised $10 000 for the purchase of large-screen monitors for the school. And other successes have followed, in raising money for cancer research and other activities.

Debbie Stewart

Language Arts and Mathematics Teacher, Valois Park School, Lester-B.-Pearson School Board

By Donald McGrath

Debbie Stewart, who has 31 years teaching experience, teaches Elementary Cycle One language arts and mathematics at the Valois Park School in Pointe-Claire. Anne Board, an education consultant with the Lester-B.-Pearson School Board, describes Ms. Stewart as someone who is sensitive and who responds to individual differences. She is also "creative and innovative, in addition to being flexible and able to adapt her materials and approaches. In her work with colleagues, she readily assumes a leadership role, shares ideas and is receptive to those of others. She has served as a resource person in the development of evaluation tools at the Ministère de l'Éducation and has been very active in the implementation of the reform in her school."

"There are four things I'd tell a new teacher," says Ms. Stewart. "First, try to finish your career with the same level of enthusiasm you had when you were starting out. Second, never be afraid to try something new; the worst that could happen is . . . it could fail! Third, expand the circle of your professional contacts; it can be a great source of learning and growth. And fourth—but certainly not last: have fun!"

Brenda Beatty

Brenda Beatty has been teaching for 18 years. She is currently an Elementary Cycle Two teacher at the Holland School in the Montcalm district of Québec City. Jill Robinson, now an education consultant with the Central Québec School Board, has, in her capacity as a school principal and teaching colleague, known Beatty for some 12 years. Beatty, she says, "promotes a learning environment that stimulates ongoing learning and personal growth. She sets standards that are attainable, yet also challenging. She establishes clear procedures that allow for choices, and is very focused professionally. She willingly leads projects and assists with their coordination and realization. And she is generous about sharing her expertise with others."

"It's the kids," says Beatty, when asked what it is that motivates her as a teacher. "What you get from them is true, real, basic." Focusing on the very human dimension of teaching, she went on to say that, in becoming a parent herself, she has developed a more complete perspective on the profession, in addition to greater compassion. "The stress level in families has increased in recent years," she says, and an important part of her job is helping children in these new circumstances.

In Memoriam

Frances Elizabeth Halliday
1947-2002

Frances Halliday enjoyed a brilliant career in education. Her many accomplishments include teaching at McGill University and Bishop's University, where she coordinated the graduate program in education. She also worked as a consultant for the Partnership for School Improvement (MEQ) and for the Western Québec School Board.

Searching for a metaphor for her friend's life, Barbara Tannant, a language arts consultant with the Eastern Townships School Board, came up with that of needlepoint: "In the living tapestry that she created, each of us is a thread—a different colour, a different texture—that she wove into rich patterns of inquiry and reflection, of teaching, learning and research. Her life touched lives at every level of the educational community, from students in the smallest schools to ministers in departments of education not only in this province, but across Canada and the United States, and indeed around the world. Some lives wove themselves easily into her design, others had to be pulled through the holes kicking and struggling. But just as the canvas supports the stitches in a needlepoint, so, too, did Fran support the changes she initiated in us. She challenged many of us to our very limits and beyond. She will be greatly missed."

The Strength of the School Team: Rallying Administrators and Teachers

Enthusiastic participation is the fuel that drives school teams. How can we recognize and promote this quality? School administrators share their ideas.

Christian Châteauvert

Principal, École Beauvalois (VVB), Commission scolaire de la Baie James

By Eve Krakow

Christian Châteauvert arrived at Beauvalois elementary school at a trying time: formerly housed in two separate buildings, the 88 students and 6 teachers had just been brought together under one roof. The debate over which village was to accommodate the new school—Val-Paradis, Villebois or Beaucanton—had been heated, leaving everyone exhausted. (The school is now located in Val-Paradis.)

What's more, the school had had several principals over the previous few years; one year the principal was there only two days a week. "So having the stability of someone on site has been a mobilizing factor," says Christian, who is now in his fourth year as principal. "It's important to have an administration with a presence."

In his case, this presence is not just in the school, but in the classrooms as well. For in addition to his administrative duties, Christian teaches physical education part time. He says this emerged as a positive point during the school diagnosis. "Teachers felt more valued having a principal who is in the classrooms, who knows the students and who experiences the same situations they do."

Christian has seen a tremendous change in the community's attitude over the past few years. "We actually had to hold elections for the governing board, because we had too many interested parents," he says.

Part of this is a result of his efforts to involve all stakeholders, beginning with the drafting of the school's educational project, launched officially earlier this year. "There was no such document before," he adds. The school also came up with its own logo—"a logo is a concrete way of expressing one's sense of belonging. For our presentation to parents, I had a few t-shirts made with the logo on the back. We ran out!"

Christian is trying to capitalize on this new enthusiasm to build ties within the community. Several projects have already resulted. For example, for the past two years the municipality has lent the school two recreational leaders for lunch-time activities.

The school has also set up a homework assistance service in each village. "It's a rural population. Almost all our students come by bus, and they can't stay after school because of bus scheduling considerations," Christian explains. He asked each village to provide a space where the homework service could be offered and then hired a tutor for each. "It was very important to me that it be someone from the village," he notes. There is also an individualized assistance program for students in need.

With such a small staff, building a strong team spirit has not been too difficult. Yet Christian does not take this for granted. He believes in making sure that everyone is part of the decision-making process.

"From the day I arrived, I thought it was very important that everyone be given the time and place to express their opinion on all the choices that had to be made," he says. If he comes up with an idea but someone else has a better one, he's not afraid to recognize it. And he adds, "In a process of change, it's important to be able to admit that you don't have all the answers. I think that is a quality that managers need to have."

Louise Pothier

Principal, École secondaire de l'Aubier (Secondary I, II, III), Commission scolaire des Navigateurs

By Eve Krakow

Four years ago, De l'Aubier secondary school was granted the resources to implement a special project: Citoyens du Monde (Citizens of the World). Its purpose was to find ways to grab students' interest and get them to want to come to school.

"So for the past four years a team of teachers has been discussing how to do things differently," says Louise Pothier, principal. This has meant developing new teaching and learning tools (such as the portfolio) and strategies (such as project-based learning and cooperative councils), and reviewing some of the subject content (such as introducing philosophy to develop reflexive thinking).

De l'Aubier was already a project-based school, offering profiles in languages, arts, music and computers. "What we had decided as a school team was that, in order to mobilize young people, we had to help them discover a passion—a passion that would become the thread throughout their learning," explains Louise. "We wagered that even learning difficulties would be lessened if young people had a better-defined reason for coming to school and a personal goal to achieve."

The Citoyens du Monde project was geared to a new clientele: highly curious students, who like to reflect and do research, but who also need space in the classroom to talk and discuss things, to be involved. Louise explains that De l'Aubier used to have the reputation of being a school for students with learning diffuculties, which meant that others stayed away. The Citoyens du Monde project changed that image.

"We wagered that if we could attract other kinds of students—not necessarily students who excel at everything, but children who like school—we could change the school climate," recalls Louise. It was a bet they won. Now in its second year, the Citoyens du Monde project has twice as many enrollments, and the surrounding publicity has brought new students into the other profiles as well.

Almost all of the school's 880 students are now involved in a project. It's a model that rallies both students and teachers. "Each person finds something suited to him or her," says Louise. The failure rate among students involved in projects is half that of those without one.

Rallying Her Team

Louise radiates passion and positive energy, and this has no doubt helped her rally her team. Yet it is only one aspect of mobilizing personnel, she says. "Everyone has their own stengths. I try to zero in on what each person has to offer," she explains. "The feedback I've had is, 'What's really nice is that you don't play favourites.'"

This strategy is simply a reflection of who she is. "Authenticity is an essential quality for managers," Louise notes. "If teachers didn't feel I was being genuine, they probably wouldn't come on board."

True participative management is also key. "From the start of this project, the teachers were in charge of drawing up the timetable and choosing their tasks," she says. "Even if I didn't always agree with their decisions, I endorsed them, and we reevaluated the situation at the end of the year. It's important to give people power over their fate and their job. Generally, when you give people space, they use it well."

Recognizing people's strengths, involving them in decision making, believing that every problems has a solution, and demonstrating coherence and authenticity—these are Louise's ingredients for success.

"When I started my career as an administrator, I never would have believed that a principal could have so much influence. I figured I was one person among many," she recalls. "But I was forced to conclude that I set a tone. I think all administrators need to be aware of this fact: whether they want to or not, they set a tone. So you may as well be aware of this and use that influence to make the school a dynamic place."

Donna Bisson

Principal, Bonaventure Polyvalent School, Eastern Shores School Board

By David Fuchs and Eve Krakow

"Even before the reform discussions, we were heading in that direction because the needs of the students dictated it. But I think we still have a long way to go."

Donna Bisson is the principal of Bonaventure Polyvalent School, a small English-language school for Secondary III to V. It has 122 students, most of whom bus in from surrounding communities. (Bisson is also the principal of New Richmond High School, about 25 km away, which offers pre-kindergarten to Secondary II.)

Over the years, student needs have led Bonaventure to adapt its programs: French and Math are taught over six periods, students are given two years to complete their physical science and history, and teachers often work with students in small groups.

The school has also developed a number of projects that already fit within the reform's spirit of meeting the needs of each student in order to achieve success for all.

"Group 4-1"—short for Secondary IV, year 1—is a class of students who, for a variety of reasons, did not pass Secondary III. "Every one of them has their story; they are all at risk," says Bisson. Team teaching is used to help students build their skills in English, French and math, and to introduce them to Secondary IV history and science.

"I think we're very good at reaching out to our students and bringing out the best in them," she says. This often means working in collaboration with student services. For example, an "advocacy" program helps students get to know themselves and build personal motivation and self-esteem. A youth clinic is offered once a month in collaboration with the CLSC: a doctor comes in and sees students by appointment, often dealing with issues such as eating disorders and sexuality.

Bonaventure Polyvalent has also developed close ties with its French next-door neighbour, École aux Quatre-Vents (Commission scolaire Réné-Lévesque), which has 500 students. Some of the French school's English-speaking students come to Bonaventure for English class, and vice-versa. One of Bonaventure's students is taking Math 536 at Aux Quatre-Vents,

while four of their students are taking history at Bonaventure. "This exchange gives the students more choices and broadens their awareness."

Finally, there are the school's extensive after-school and noon programs. For the past ten years, the school has offered an after-school sports program two days a week. But it's not just sports. "The first 40 minutes is compulsory study hall: students work in silence, with a few teachers walking around to help out with homework." Out of 122 students, 40 stay on a regular basis. On two other days a week, there is an after-school tutoring period, with one tutor and at least two teachers on hand.

"There is no doubt in my mind that many students have achieved their high school diplomas because of these after-school programs." It gives them the structure, help and hope they need, she explains.

The noon program is for remediation. The essential point is that this time is built into the teacher's timetables. On those days, the teachers providing the remediation eat lunch either before or after. This enables them to be available when the students are free—without adding to their schedules.

Challenges

Yet even though many of their projects already reflect the spirit of the reform, they still have a long way to go, says Bisson.

"For the most part, our teachers are specialists. Because we're a small school and we know each other well, there's been cooperation. But we're going to have to organize ourselves so that we're working more effectively in a cross-curricular fashion between subjects."

The biggest challenge will be overcoming the obstacles of time and resources to get more teachers into professional development sessions. "There is a reluctance to accept the reform at the secondary level, but I think that once there are more professional development opportunities for teachers, they're going to realize that the reform is coming from teachers, and that it is happening because teachers have been saying, 'We have to do this.'"

Norman Woods

Principal, Howards S. Billings Regional High School, New Frontier School Board

By David Fuchs

Norman Woods only recently took up his post as principal at Howard S. Billings High School. Fresh from his experience as assistant principal at Chateauguay Valley Regional High School in Ormstown—where he worked with grade 7 at-risk students and developed team projects—he doesn't consider his move to Howards S. Billings school as too unsettling. "We already have an established middle school project that is very much aligned with the principles of the reform," says Woods. The experience he gained in Ormstown will come in handy this year.

The middle school project involves all Secondary I and II students. It is like a school within the school and is located in a separate part of the building. This is the school board's pilot project for the reform. The goal is to reinvest the expertise gained from the middle school into the senior high school and the school board.

After a period of adaptation to the new administration, Woods sees the main challenge as being the development of team building with the teachers from Secondary III, IV and V. "The main goal this year will be to bring the school closer to the community. The focus will be on developing complex learning situations for students to take part in. Teachers must feel that they are in charge of this change," says Woods. At the school, teachers meet on a regular basis for professional development and the school receives help in the form of PDIG grants to spend some time reflecting on teamwork, to network and to form complex situations to maximize cross-curricular learning.

"We have to develop an active type of learning, an inquiring mind. Students are more involved when we take a more hands-on approach. For example, at Chateauguay Valley Regional, I developed a project entitled 'The Battle of Chateauguay.' It was a history project that included a lot of cross-curricular work. Students became caught up in this project because it dealt with a local battle. Students enjoy learning that is somehow or another connected to their everyday lives," says the new principal.

At Howards S. Billings school, a school improvement program was implemented with members of the community, teachers and staff. Committees have been established to deal with issues such as school discipline, professional development and classroom management. The committees regularly take the information that is provided by the Ministère and adapt it to their particular context, as part of the school development plan. "The staff seem to be on top of things," adds Woods.

All of the teachers interviewed for this issue have one point in common: they are completely focused on meeting students' needs, keeping them happy and helping them to fully develop their personalities. In other words, they take the emotional dimension of learning into account, as we hear from Nérée Bujold, a retired and associate professor in the faculty of education at Université Laval.

The Emotional Dimension of Learning

Placing Needs First

By Claudine St-Germain,
translated by Benjamin Waterhouse

Nérée Bujold, a researcher in education who is officially retired yet still very active in the school system, gave a speech on the emotional dimension of learning at the training session for resource people held in Laval last November 26 and 27. "This may all sound a little theoretical for those who prefer to discuss the practical aspects of teaching," he conceded. "For people who prefer to discuss practical approaches in the field, it may seem a little theoretical to be talking about the emotional dimension of learning," said Bujold. "I used to be an education consultant for university teachers, and even professors working in a theoretical area were only interested in getting practical pointers! Unfortunately, someone who has mastered the practical aspects of teaching, but not the theory, doesn't always know what to do. If teachers have no mental picture of child development, they cannot diagnose problems and help solve them. An understanding of the theory–which, needless to say, can be transferred into teaching practices–is essential."

A group recently established at Laval University to document and research the integral development of individuals, of which Bujold is a member, has identified several dimensions that form part of this development: the cognitive, physical, social, emotional, moral and ecological. "To ensure that students succeed, we have to look at all the dimensions, including the emotional and physical dimensions. Teachers whose only goal is to transmit course content are a little like farmers who want to harvest apples but don't care about the roots of their apple trees! I find it reassuring that all these dimensions are addressed in the cross-curricular competencies, subject-specific competencies and subject areas of the Québec Education Program."

From needs come actions

Bujold explained his vision of emotional development. Underlying everything are our needs (whether innate or conditioned by the environment), and we spend our whole lives trying to meet them.

Our needs define our values, in other words, the relative importance that we assign to the objects, persons and events that surround us–everything, in fact, that may be suitable to meet our needs. The more we lack (or have lacked in the past) a particular thing, the more we value it. The value of the things around us increases depending on how much we need them.

"I often see teachers who say they wish their students would take their subject more seriously, and my response is: 'Make it hard to get! Instead of stuffing them like prize turkeys, place them in situations where they need your subject. Dangle it in front of them, challenge them to come and get it.' This is how to get them to take a subject seriously."

Our values, in turn, form the basis of our perceptions (i.e selective reception of environmental stimuli), our emotions (physiological reactions to the stimuli we perceive), our interests (the desire to obtain an object of value), our motivation (an impulse to act) and our attitudes (feeling about our actions). Only when all the components have been called into play do we move into action, which involves verbal or non-verbal acts. "To promote attitudes favourable to learning, we have to build on the students' needs, values, perceptions, emotions, etc." said Bujold.

The difficulty is that only actions can be observed, and even then, only the traces they leave. To influence actions, we have to dig deeper and uncover students' needs. In other words, working back from an observable behaviour pattern, we have to attempt to reconstruct the emotional pathway it followed in order to identify the need that triggered it.

"The more I respond to a need, the more the associated behaviour pattern will tend to disappear," explained Bujold. "If I want to encourage the behaviour, I withdraw the object of value. This is what I mean by taking the emotional dimension into account: we can't feed someone who isn't hungry. Once I've discovered what my students lack, I've gained power. Our power over others depends on our ability to meet their needs. In other words, our power over our students depends on our ability to help them meet their objectives. I imagine that many teachers would like to have power over their students, if only the power to make them study!"

The theory of Abraham Maslow, as viewed by Herzberg, can be useful in understanding the needs of

students. This theory highlights the hierarchy of human needs. The first level is physiological security (food, clothing, shelter). Until we have met these primary needs, we don't look for anything else. Once these needs have been met, we go to the second level: psychological security (a sense of belonging). We seek out our peers. If we are able to do so, we move on to the next level: self-esteem. "Seen from this angle, a child's ability to be part of a group forms the foundation for the development of his or her self-esteem," stated Bujold.

Moving from the need for self-esteem to the next level (appreciation of others, or altruism) is also the turning point between non-motivation and motivation. At this point, Bujold warned about the dangers inherent in evaluation methods. "Every time we compromise students' self-esteem, we reduce their motivation. We have to be very careful about handing out marks. They often undermine self-esteem and reduce motivation. Evaluation methods must be used with as much tact and diplomacy as possible."

Only after the needs for security and esteem have been met do we express a need for knowledge. If children do not have opportunities to mix with others, talk to them and help them, they will not be interested in learning. Next come the needs for aesthetic pleasure, actualization and transcendence.

The need to take the emotional dimension into account

Working with students' emotional dimension automatically raises ethical considerations, since changing an order of values creates an ethical problem. "Many teachers are unwilling to address the actual needs of their students because of this," said Bujold.

There is justification for doing so, however. In fact, any training process inevitably involves a foray into the emotional dimension. Nérée Bujold has identified several needs that can justify intervention: self-protection, preservation of the species, social integration, social order, preservation of the environment and transcendence. Care is still needed, though, to avoid encroaching on an individual's private life.

Bujold has also identified several types of intervention connected with the emotional dimension, including gratification (responding to an important need), counselling (assistance based on interpersonal communication), exemplification (exhibiting the behaviour pattern we are trying to promote), social interaction (the influence of the group on the transmission of values), practice (authentic situations), reinforcement (approval, encouragement, etc.), evaluation (power to provide feedback) and conditioning (behaviourism).

Lastly, Bujold carried out some interesting research on 3 000 students at Laval University, to discover which factors were most likely to explain their commitment to a program of study. The findings show that the anticipated academic outcome had little effect on commitment. The most significant elements were satisfaction with the course (1.7%), a close relationship with the teacher (9%) and, exceeding all the others, positive feelings towards the teacher (26%). When taking a closer look at this positive sentiment, the research team discovered that the most important variable was the teacher's teaching style (whether or not it was focused on the students' learning).

"Teachers have a huge influence over their students' commitment," concluded Bujold. We often hear teachers claim that they're not there to be liked! My response to that is, if your students don't like you, they won't like your subject either. As teachers, it is our duty to be liked and, to achieve that, we have to focus on the needs of our students."

Schoolscapes

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